

TCC 2013
COE Faculty/Staff Technology Needs Assessment

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Abstract: As the rapid rate of Technology and Distance Programs (TDP) at College of Education at University of Hawaii at Manoa (COE UHM) is expanding, TDP is striving to help faculty and staff at COE UHM build up their professional development (PD). This paper discusses a needs assessment conducted at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) to understand faculty and staff's actual needs and preferences. Conducting useful and effective workshops and better serving the faculty and staff at COE UHM has become a very important issue for TDP, however scheduling conflicts and topic selection have caused inefficiencies in the workshop program. In response to these challenges TDP at COE UHM has been offering professional development sessions and conducting evaluations following each workshop. The purpose of this needs assessment (NA) is to assess the professional development needs and preferences of faculty in the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Introduction

As access to the Internet and the World Wide Web has constantly growing, more and more students enrolled to online programs at higher education institutions. Distance learning has continued to expand. Technology-based professional development opportunities are one of TDP's main focuses at COE UHM. In the article "Teachers' professional development: a solitary or collegial (ad) venture? Teaching and Teacher Education", mentioned that "in virtually every state in the county, reform efforts are dramatically raising expectations for students, and consequently, for teachers" In other words, if educators can master new skills, have responsibilities and to change their practices here at the University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Education would help their students meet this dramatically raising expectations. The Technology and Distance Programs (TDP) at UHM COE provides COE faculty and staff a place to learn and to promote distance education.

Background

Individual professional development has always been in mind for professors and staff at College of Education University of Hawaii at Manoa (COE UHM). Technology and Distance Programs

(TDP) has been offering workshops to support faculty and staff at the COE UHM. Workshops are in common educational format for transmitting information and promoting skill acquisition.

Working as a graduate assistant at Educational Technology and Distance Programs at UHM has allowed me to conduct workshops if needed. However, when I evaluated the TDP workshop performance from 2008-2011, I discovered some problems. One consistently occurring problem is faculty or staff will have the same question in regards to their professional development, TDP needs to determine the most common topics that faculty and staff are interested in. The other major concern was the number of people who attended the workshop has fluctuated significantly, people would sign up and for personal reasons miss the scheduled workshop. As a research assistant, I came across this problem and wanted to find out more about the needs for TDP and how it may better serve the faculty and staff at COE UHM. The purpose of this needs assessment (NA) is to assess the needs and preferences of faculty in the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa to enhance their professional development.

Literature review

Since learning and building professional development is getting more and more important, the authors found that in order for the teachers to meet these expectations, teachers need to deepen their content knowledge and learn new methods of teaching. (Moon & Moon, 2001) From my standpoint as a graduate assistant for the Technology and Distance Programs, I help teachers learn new technology and incorporate it as a part of their teaching. Participants are often in need of reminders, or different professional needs preferences; participants can review what they learned at the session and use it in their daily teaching life. The needs assessment will help TDP find out what they can do to assess the faculty at COE UHM. This paper. (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995) really had me thinking the incentives for teachers at College of Education University of Hawaii at Manoa. The authors talked about that early in their professional lives teachers in basic public school are better paid than other comparable groups, and they found out some incentives for teachers at the school level improve learning achievement. Portable resources and follow-up is widely supported in the literature. It is considered critical to effective implementation of professional development in the classroom. (Nasmith, L., & Steinert, Y. 2001). In an extensive review of the professional development literature found that the limited implementation of training in classrooms could be attributed to lack of follow-up materials support. (Felder, R. M., Brent, R., Chontos, A., Chontos, S., Mines, S. D. S. of, Development, T. B. F., & Corporation, D. C. 1996).

Methodology

The purpose of this NA is to ascertain the needs for faculty and staff at COE UHM. A Google form was selected to develop, create and publish the online survey questionnaires. The survey was implemented online through the COE UHM mail system. The data was collected via an anonymous online Google survey consisting of 4 Likert scale and 7 open-ended questions. Participants were asked to rate the most preferable time frame for them in a typical Fall/Spring Semester. Participants were also asked to answer their most desirable professional development topics and how effective TDP's services were to them. This NA was emailed to the

faculty and staff at COE UHM and 35 completed responses were received. This survey will help TDP understand what faculty and staff professional development needs and preferences are. This assessment will be divided into three main categories, 1) Experience with TDP services 2) Professional development preference and 3) Demographics. The survey will include both multiple choice and open answers regarding what they had experienced in the past with TDP on professional development and what they would like to see in future workshops. Personal observation and informal interviews will also be utilized as a data collection method. While students are attending the workshops in 2012, comments about TDP services will be recorded. The faculty and staff at University of Hawaii College of Education will have the opportunity to attend several workshops provided by the Technology and Distance Programs by 2012 December. Theoretically, the result of the survey will be able to give TDP a good evaluation in regards to the preferences of faculty of COE at UHM.

The survey data will be collected throughout a semester with tracking of each individual interview. A comparison of the survey data was collected before the month of February 2013. By the end of Mid-March 2013. Following this study, TDP will be more informed on faculty and staff opinions of the preferences of professional development to improve the service in the year of 2013 and many years to come.

Results & Findings

Thirty-five(n) respondents completed surveys revealed a new perspective into the scheduling of TDP workshops. The responses to survey questions were analyzed and some presented in charts or tables with preference and percentages (%). The data was analyzed to identify the best workshop days during a week in a typical Fall/Spring semester at COE UHM. The following chart represent the most convenient time(from bottom to top) that faculty and staff could attend a workshop.

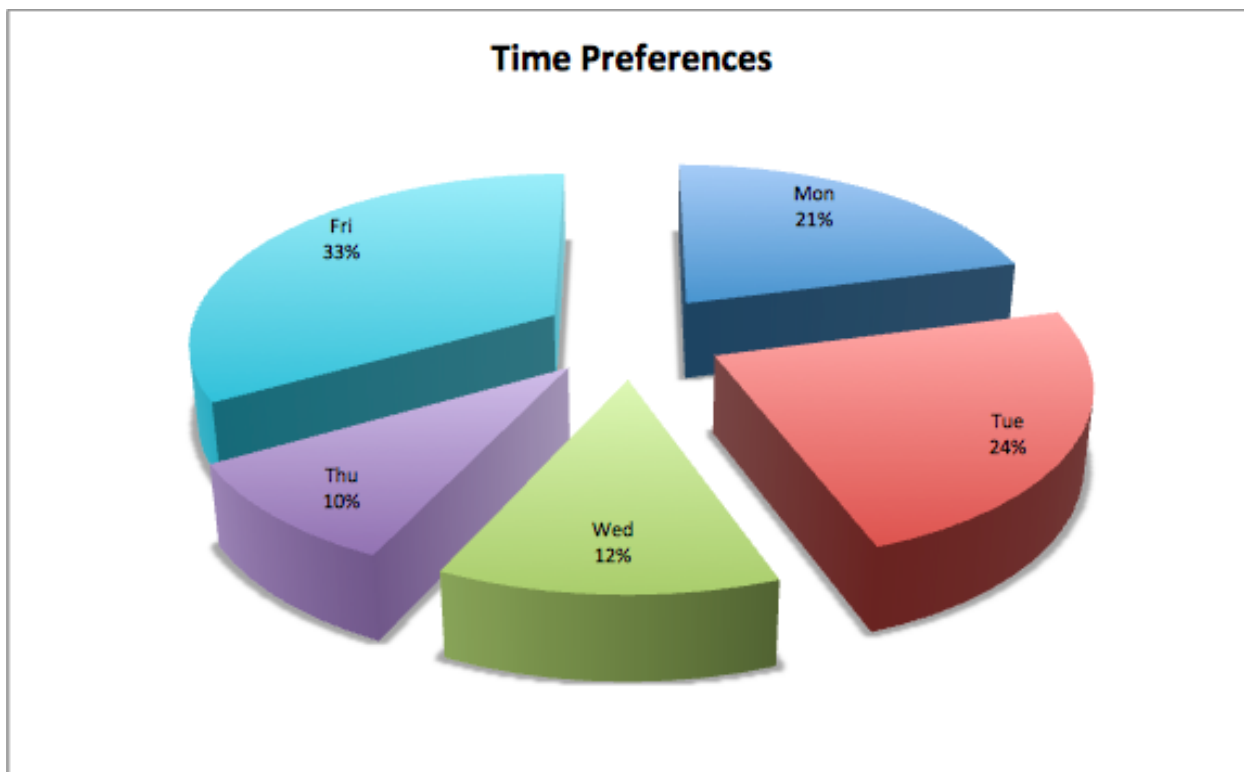


Respondents ranged from eight(n) tenured faculty, eleven(n) are on track track faculty, eleven(n) are currently not on tenured track and five(n) staff . Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were female, eight percent were male.

One question also inquired about future workshop time preference and notifications. Data reflects TDP should announce workshops early so that can it be planned for. It seems like the current workshops are only announced two weeks ahead of time and at that point it's often different to schedule. A one month announcement lead time would be appropriate. TDP have already started posting announcements on the COE UHM main web page and sending out email reminders at least twice prior to workshop time.

Written comments indicate that originally the majority of workshops had been scheduled on

Wednesdays with a lesser amount scheduled on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. The survey results showed that the most inconvenient days for a workshop according to the faculty and staff surveyed are Wednesday and Thursday with only a total of 22% having time on those days of the week. The most suitable day for workshops was Friday with 33% of staff indicating that Friday, especially early afternoon on Friday being the most suitable time. Previously workshops had not been conducted on Friday due to the assumption that faculty and staff would be less willing to spend more time at the workplace on Friday being that it is the end of the work week.



Another finding made in this survey was the notification period necessary to better coordinate with the staff and faculty. Before two weeks of notification was given. Throughout the course of the survey it was suggested that at least one month of notice be given so that faculty and staff may accurately plan their schedules around the workshops. In order to avoid the possibility of workshop enrollees forgetting about the scheduled workshop or accidentally planning something during the time of the workshop reminders will also be sent out two weeks, and one day prior to the workshop.

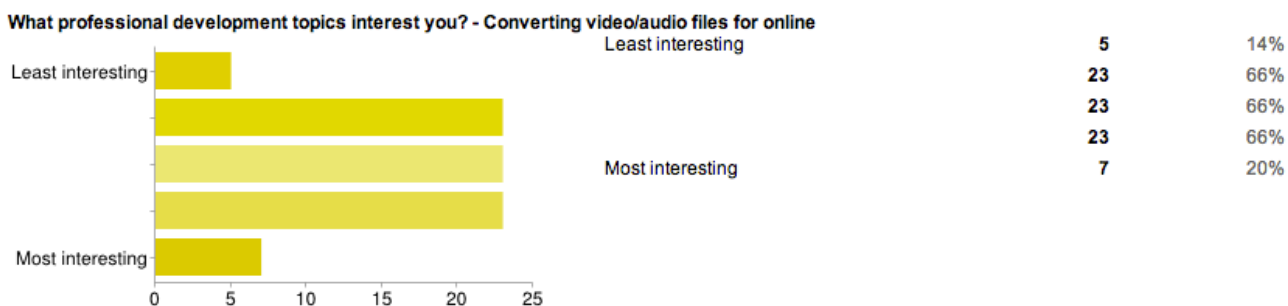
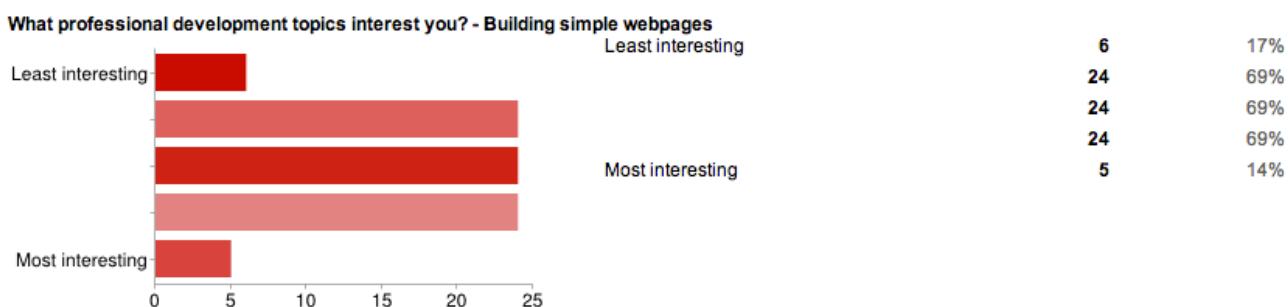
Participants in the study showed that more than half of the faculty and staff have utilized TDP's services as their resources to support their PD needs. This data has several interesting implications.

One person indicated he/she thinks TDP should have a blogging site. A blog that records help desk logs, newest technology or assist people use programs with other faculty related duties, other than teaching. Some people implied that they are experts or know how to learn quickly themselves when needed but would love to attend some more advanced workshops. However, one of the participants also says "I few time experienced the presenter did not seem to be able to

see that the audience was not where the presenter was, or had to deal with an audience with such diverse levels of skill that it was difficult to meet the needs of the audience.” This implies there is room for TDP to improve regarding their understanding of the varying levels of proficiency among the faculty and staff and that more specific classes should be tailored to the varying skill levels to promote professional development. In addition, some noted that workshops should include teaching strategy in order to better empower faculty and staff to utilize the technology presented to them in their curriculum.

Implications or Discussion

One obstacle in the collection of data was the question set up. While the grid format would give the audience more choices it lacked thorough indicators and should have been more detailed in order to obtain clearer responses. In Google Survey, the grid style questions do not operate with a scaled answer. Only the most and the least interesting options were listed in the responses sheet. The rest of the neutral answers were left blank with no categorization of the intensity of the response which leads to a lack of indication in the subjects judgment. This following example chart shows the same result for the neutral answers.



The few participants that reported they had chosen the least or the most interesting topic were helpful but the inaccuracy of the responses lead to further questions. The thirty-five people that selected one of the options that was not “least interesting” or “most interesting” but rather one of

the three less decisive answers were only recorded as undecided and did not provide adequate information on the topic. They were simply not measurable outcomes. Due to conflicts created between the inaccurate and sometimes misleading answer option incorrect percentages were created. For instance, “Narrating PowerPoints” was ranked as the sixth most popular topic however, it was also ranked as the sixth least attractive topic according to the thirty-five collected surveys due to the fact that neutral votes were not counted.

| What professional development topics interest you? | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Least interesting | ? | | | Most interesting |
| Building simple webpages | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Converting video/audio files for online | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Using Lailima | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Blackboard Collaborate/ Virtual Office | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Photo Editing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Creating appointment slots using Google calendar | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Screen capturing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Recording/editing audio | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Using video equipment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Moreover one of the most interesting topics selected by the audience has not been offered in the past two years by the TDP COE. “Techniques for communicating with students online” is one of the fundamental aspects of distance learning and this high demand for workshops regarding this topic has drawn the attention of our staff. It may be practical to conduct a good professional development workshop with some non-technical related seminars, such as providing online learning tactics, and building the online community. This recommendation can also support instructors in developing plans for their own professional growth, in the area of education technology.

Table 1: Topics in regards to personal preference.

| What professional development topics interest you? | |
|--|--------|
| Techniques for communicating with students online | 22.22% |
| Mobile devices | 19.05% |
| Building dynamic powerpoints | 15.87% |
| Planning an online course | 14.29% |
| Building an online community | 14.29% |

Table 1: The least popular topics

What professional development topics least interest you?

| | |
|--|--------|
| Screening capturing | 24.49% |
| Creating appointment slots using Google Calendar | 14.29% |
| Photo Editing | 12.24% |
| Using video equipments | 12.24% |
| Narrating powerpoints | 12.24% |
| Planning online course | 12.24% |
| Recording and editing audio | 12.24% |

Conclusion

A successful professional development workshop has been defined as a combination of training, development, team building, communications, motivation and planning. The faculty should always be able to develop their professional skills and their collection of tools to expand their teaching ability. The purpose of this needs assessment has been to assess the professional development needs and preferences of faculty in the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. After collecting and analyzing the data of this needs assessment the following were focal points were pin pointed for improvement so that the effectiveness of TDP workshops will increase and yield better training for UHM faculty and staff:

1. Implementation of strategy workshops that will revolve less around how to operate technology in the classroom and more around how to successfully blend technology into lessons
2. More intuitive scheduling of workshops that is based around the schedules of faculty and staff and gives them more advanced notice as well as a reminder system that will keep them up to date on workshop schedules
3. Breaking up of the workshops into more skill level specific sessions so groups of faculty and staff that attend will not be left behind due to lack of prerequisite knowledge or feel detached due to repetition of prerequisite knowledge for the sake of other attendees.

The responses to this needs assessment were interesting in that there was a fairly even spread describing purpose for keeping the data files. By analyzing the responses, it will help the TDP crew to not only focus on future development aspects of the repository but on the communication points of interest to faculty and staff.

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